When the American Heart Association Board of Directors, on June 4, and after 4 years of debate, adopted a statement raising "suspicion" of heavy smoking as contributing to the development of certain heart diseases, it was intended that there be no public announcement until the resolution and an associated story had been published in July. However, a New York paper broke the story on June 6, forcing the AHA to release their statement prematurely.

As in the case of the NTA's announcement, the initial flurry attracted some attention from the press, but later stories mostly were the result of local follow-up by AHA in various localities.

Heart Assn. Report On Smoking Ready

By BARBARA YUNCKER

The American Heart Assn. has decided, after four years of debate, to declare officially that cigaret smokers are in substantially greater danger of dying from heart attacks—the nation's No. 1 killer—than are non-smokers.

The highly significant statement was adopted at a closed meeting of the AHA Board of Directors over the week-end only after the report had been stripped of advice against smoking and after plans for educational and publicity campaigns had been dropped.

The statement is not being made public now, but the action was disclosed to The Post by a board member who was present but who asked that his name not be used. The statement will be printed in Circulation, the AHA scientific journal, perhaps in July; the Journal of the American Medical Assn. will be asked to print it simultaneously.

The report was the work of an Ad Hoc Committee on Smoking headed by Dr. Louis Katz, noted Chicago researcher into the cause of heart disease; the AHA has refused to name other members of the committee. The report summarized 12 studies, mostly of makes, going back to 1940, all of which show that cigaret smokers are in 50 to 150 per cent greater danger of fatal heart attacks than are non-smokers.

Broadest of the studies was by Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond and Dr. Daniel Horn for the American Cancer Society. Subjects were 187,000 white men between the ages of 50 and 69. They were studied for 44 months. Cigaret smokers were found to be in 70 per cent greater danger than non-smokers. Expressed another way, of the 11,870 deaths during the period of the study, 385 were "excess" heart attack deaths associated with cigaret smoking.

Smokers of two or more packs a day had a heart-attack death rate 2.4 times that of non-smokers. Figures were substantially lower for those who smoked only cigars and pipes.

Accidental Link?

The tobacco industry's position is that statistics are not proof—that the apparent link may be coincidence. Hammond does not share this view. He said:

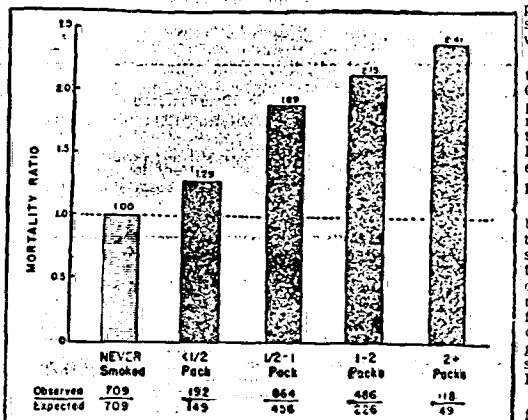

Figure 6—Mortality Ratios for Coronary Artery Disease by Current Amount of Cigarette Smoking

This chart is taken from the report in the American Journal of Public Health of the results of the Hammond-Horn study.

"Personally I find it hard to escape the conclusion that cigaret smoking increases the death rate from coronary artery diseases."

He said he finds it "astonishing that these figures have received so little attention" in contrast to the lung cancer excitement. Lung cancer claims nearly 36,000 victims a year, coronary artery attacks nearly 500,000.

The efforts to get the AHA to take a position on smoking have been stormy since 1956 when the organization took the position that no link had been established between cigarets and heart disease. Although the heart group cooperated in the Hammond-Horn study, AHA asked the cancer society to take its name out of an ACS educational booklet based on the study.

'Hot Report'

The 1956 position came under heavy attack inside the AHA as more and more statistical evidence piled up. In response Dr. Robert Wilkins of Boston, then AHA president, set up the Katz committee.

By last fall it had prepared what some doctors who saw it called "a pretty hot report" summarizing the evidence and urging an anti-smoking campaign among teen-agers and certain high-heart-risk groups. It also called for an independent research commission to organize a "thorough, systematic" program to learn "the biological and medical facts" which link smoking and heart attacks.

The report cleared four levels of the AHA hierarchy and a press release was drafted, stressing the antismoking warning.

On Nov. 23, 1959, the Central Committee for Medical and Community Action cut out the proposal for the research commission and passed the report to the full board which met Dec. 5 with 85 members present, 52 of them doctors.

Deny Pressure

After extended debate the board sent the report back to the Kats committee with instructions to revise it to contain "factual scientific data only,"—i.e., no conclusions or recommendations to be drawn from the facts. Outgoing board chairman Bruce Barton suggested the Katz committee should consult with the Tobacco Industry Research Committee.

The advertising firm Barton formerly headed, BBD&O, handles Lucky Strike. New AHA chairman Sylvester L. Weaver Jr. is a top executive at McCann, Erickson—which has the Chesterfield account. But doctors associated with the AHA told The Post that the watering-down of the report had not been a result of industry pressure.

NEW YORK POST
New York, New York
June 6, 1960

1003543418

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/sybm0000